

News Politics

Pledge to help more refugees, urges UN

Sam Coates Deputy Political Editor

The UN is urging Theresa May and her fellow party leaders to promise in the election campaign to take more refugees and stop them "suffering unnecessarily".

Gonzalo Vargas Llosa, the UNHCR representative to the UK, called on party leaders to "do the right thing" to help the vulnerable.

Writing for *The Times* on behalf of the UN refugee agency, he urged the next government to resettle 10,000 people a year in Britain from war-ravaged regions. "This would be a meaningful but realistic increase over the existing commitment, made in 2015, to receive 20,000 Syrians and 3,000 children at risk by 2020, welcome though that is," he said.

He argued that the demand was "relatively modest" and would not cost much if the government overhauled its existing separate refugee programmes.

The UN also wants Mrs May to loosen the rules preventing the reunification of family members.

"I have met countless refugees who suffer unnecessarily as a result of being separated from close family members. For many refugees, the pain of separation remains the biggest obstacle to their successful integration in a new country," Mr Vargas Llosa said.

The UN also wants the next government to try to reduce the "strikingly high" number of asylum seekers that

are detained. More than 13,000 were locked up in 2016 alone. "Being detained can leave psychological scars that endure years after release," Mr Vargas Llosa said. "This problem is exacerbated by the deeply worrying fact that Britain currently has no time limit on immigration detention. The cost of maintaining such a sizeable detention system is also extremely high."

Tim Farron, the Liberal Democrat leader, said: "Refugees are some of the most vulnerable people in any society. They have fled violence and persecution. They are homeless and stateless. They are completely reliant on the hospitality of host nations and underfunded refugee agencies to protect them. Britain can and must do more."

Robert Goodwill, the Tory immigration minister, said: "Britain has a proud tradition of helping genuine refugees fleeing persecution, and we will always continue to do so under a Conservative government. We've already committed to taking 23,000 of the most vulnerable refugees from Syria, the Middle East and North Africa — one of the biggest resettlement programmes in Europe. And we are providing our largest humanitarian response ever in Syria with over £2.3 billion in aid."

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Gonzalo Vargas Llosa: next government should do the right thing by refugees
at thetimes.co.uk



Philip May, attending church with his wife yesterday, usually keeps a low profile

Philip May to give first TV interview

Henry Zeffman Political Reporter

Theresa May's husband will give his first broadcast interview tomorrow. Mrs May will be joined by Philip in a joint appearance on the BBC programme *The One Show*.

Mr May, 59, is an important political confidant for his wife but has kept a low profile since they moved into Downing Street. He accompanies his wife to some dinners and events but has continued his financial career in London, although he regularly participates in phone canvassing at Conservative headquarters.

A party source said that having politicians interviewed on *The One Show* was "the holy grail". The programme is aired at 7pm every weekday.

Broadcast grillings of Mrs May and Jeremy Corbyn are to be announced this week. Although the prime minister has refused to debate with Mr Corbyn directly the BBC is understood to have secured agreement on a *Question Time*-style format where the leaders are questioned by members of the public. The radio station LBC is also in discussions with the parties.

The *One Show* interview is likely to focus on personal questions rather than policy. Speaking on *Desert Island Discs* on Radio 4 in 2014 Mrs May said that Philip, her husband of 36 years, had been her "rock" when her parents died when she was 25.

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